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SSM-03 SIG-03 SES-02 SAA-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00 SVC-00 /131 R

DRAFTED BY INR/RNA/NE:AAVACCARO:JVW
APPROVED BY INR/RNA: PJGRIFFIN
SSM: C W KONTOS
DESIRED DISTRIBUTION
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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 218464

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: EG, IS, PINR

SUBJECT: INTSUM 637 - AUGUST 28, 1978

LONDON FOR GLASPIE
PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
OTHER ADDRESSEES FOR CHIEFS OF MISSION

1. EGYPT-ARABS. MODERATE ARABS ARE GENERALLY CONCERNED THAT SADAT WILL MAKE TOO MANY CONCESSIONS AT CAMP DAVID. THEY APPARENTLY FEAR THAT THE EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT MAY GET CARRIED AWAY AND CONCEDE MORE THAN HE IS ABLE TO DELIVER. THIS WOULD AGAIN ISOLATE HIM FROM THE REST OF THE ARAB LEADERS AND THUS PREVENT AN ANTICIPATED CLOSING OF ARAB RANKS.

2. A LARGE ELEMENT AMONG THE MODERATE ARABS APPARENTLY BELIEVES THAT THE CAMP DAVID TALKS WILL BENEFIT THEM AS WELL AS US-ARAB RELATIONS, EVEN THOUGH THEY BELIEVE THE SUMMIT WILL FAIL AS A RESULT OF ISRAEL'S UNWILLINGNESS TO RESPOND TO ANY ARAB DEMANDS OR TO ACCEPT 242 OR 338. THE MODERATES THINK THEY WILL BENEFIT FROM THIS ISRAELI INTRANSIGENCE AT THE CONFERENCE BECAUSE THE ARAB STATES WILL BE DRAWN CLOSER TOGETHER AND US PUBLIC OPINION WILL BECOME MORE SYMPATHETIC TO THE ARABS.
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3. MOREOVER, IN THEIR VIEW, BY INVITING EVERYONE TO CAMP DAVID THE US HAS BECOME A FULL PARTNER IN SEEKING PEACE. THIS HAS RELIEVED PRESSURE ON SADAT FROM THE OTHER ARABS. THESE MODERATES, THEREFORE, CONSIDER THE CHANCES FOR ARAB RECONCILIATION FOLLOWING CAMP DAVID -- WHETHER OR NOT THE CONFERENCE SUCCEEDS -- TO BE EXCELLENT. THE MAJOR DANGER TO AN EARLY ARAB RAPPROCHEMENT WOULD BE IF SADAT CONCEDES TOO MUCH DURING THE TALKS.

4. WE NOTE THAT MANY MODERATE ARABS HAVE CRITICIZED THE SADAT INITIATIVE PRIMAR,LY BECAUSE OF THE DISUNITY IT CAUSED IN THE ARAB WORLD. THE ISRAELIS, ACCORDING TO THIS VIEW, TOOK THIS DISUNITY TO BE A SIGN OF ARAB WEAKNESS AND THEREFORE BECAME MORE INTRANSIGENT. ON THE OTHER HAND, IF THE ARABS WERE TO REUNITE, THE ISRA"ELIS WOULD HAVE TO BE MORE COMPROMISING. (CONFIDENTIAL)

5. LEBANON. THERE WAS SOME HEAVY FIGHTING IN THE NORTH OVER THE WEEKEND AS SYRIAN TROOPS AND PHALANGIST MILITIA-MEN CLASHED. SYRIAN ADF EFFORTS TO CLAMP DOWN FURTHER ON PHALANGE-CONTROLLED VILLAGES EAST AND NORTH OF BATROUN AND

IN THE BEKAA VALLEY LED TO ESCALATED FIGHTING (INVOLVING AIRMOBILE OPERATIONS BY SYRIAN SPECIAL FORCES UNITS, ACCORDING TO PHALANGE RADIO) WHICH LEFT OVER 60 DEAD. THE SYRIAN OPERATIONS APPARENTLY CONTINUED INTO SUNDAY.

6. THUS, THE SITUATION IN LEBANON REMAINS WORRISOME DESPITE THE RELATIVE CALM IN BEIRUT. THE CESSATION OF HEAVY SHELLING OF CHRISTIAN BEIRUT BY THE SYRIANS IN EARLY AUGUST AND THE REOPENING OF BEIRUT PORT LAST WEEK ARE ENCOURAGING DEVELOPMENTS. NEVERTHELESS, MACHINEGUN AND SNIPER FIRE CONTINUE, THE POLITICAL IMPASSE HAS NOT BEEN RESOLVED, AND SERIOUS INCIDENTS ARE OCCURRING THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY.

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7. PROPAGANDA BLASTS BY THE SYRIANS AND THE RIGHTISTS AGAINST EACH OTHER ARE EXACERBATING THE HOSTILITY ON BOTH SIDES:

(A) THE SYRIAN PRESS HAS LASHED OUT AT CAMILLE SHAMOUN FOR HIS ALLEGED VISIT TO ISRAEL. THE CHRISTIANS ARE CHARGED WITH TRYING TO ESTABLISH A MARONITE REPUBLIC.

(B) THE RIGHTISTS CONTINUE TO CLAIM THAT THE SYRIANS ARE SLOWLY ANNEXING LEBANON. THESE REPORTS ARE REplete WITH EXAMPLES OF HARASSMENT OF LEBANESE BY SYRIAN FORCES.

8. THE CHRISTIANS ARE PARTICULARLY CONCERNED WITH THE SITUATION IN NORTHERN LEBANON. THEY ALLEGE THAT THE SYRIANS ARE MOVING AGAINST CHRISTIAN VILLAGES AND SLOWLY ELIMINATING CHRISTIAN STRONGHOLDS IN THE AREA. NEVERTHELESS, IF THE SYRIANS DECIDE TO INCREASE THE PRESSURE ON THE CHRISTIANS, THEY WOULD MOST LIKELY MOVE AGAINST VILLAGES THAT ARE RELATIVELY ISOLATED FROM THE CHRISTIAN STRONGHOLDS AND THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA. CHRISTIAN FEARS ARE HEIGHTENED BY INDICATIONS THAT THE SYRIANS INTEND TO TIGHTEN THEIR GRIP ON LEBANON. ACCORDING TO A SOURCE OF OUR DEFENSE ATTACHE, INSTEAD OF REDUCING THE SYRIAN MILITARY PRESENCE IN LEBANON, THE SYRIANS PLAN TO INCREASE IT FROM THE CURRENT 30,000 TO 40,000 TROOPS.

9. A COMPLICATING FACTOR IS THE MUTUAL SUSPICION BETWEEN SYRIA AND ISRAEL. EACH SIDE SUSPECTS THAT THE OTHER MAY STIMULATE VIOLENCE IN LEBANON BEFORE THE CAMP DAVID SUMMIT. THE SYRIANS BELIEVE THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD DO THIS TO AVOID HAVING TO MAKE CONCESSIONS. ALSO FROM THE SYRIAN VANTAGE POINT, THE ISRAELIS ARE TRYING TO USE THE CHRISTIANS TO WEAKEN TH" SYRIAN REGIME. ISRAELI INTER-CONFIDENTIAL

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VENTION IN LEBANON BY ARMING THE CHRISTIANS IS VIEWED IN
DAMASCUS AS INTERFERENCE IN SYRIAN INTERNAL AFFAIRS. THE
ISRAELIS, FOR THEIR PART, ARE CONCERNED THAT THE SYRIANS
MAY USE LEBANON TO CREATE FRICTION AT CAMP DAVID AND TO
EMBARRASS ISRAEL. (CONFIDENTIAL) CHRISTOPHER

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION, MONITORING FACILITIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978STATE218464
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: AAVACCARO:JVW
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X2
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780352-0177
Format: TEL
From: STATE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780816/aaaaanhq.tel
Line Count: 180
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: a01e635a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ORIGIN INR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 27 apr 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1598570
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: INTSUM 637 - AUGUST 28, 1978 LONDON FOR GLASPIE PARIS FOR NICHOLAS MURPHY
TAGS: PINR, MARR, EG, IS, UN
To: SINAI
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a01e635a-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014